



M+B

STEPHEN BUSCEMI
Playing In And Out Of Tune

November 1 – December 6, 2025

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STEPHEN BUSCEMI

Playing In And Out Of Tune

M+B is pleased to present *Playing In And Out Of Tune*, an exhibition of new works by Stephen Buscemi. This is Buscemi's first solo presentation with the gallery. The exhibition opens on Saturday, November 1 with an opening reception at the gallery from 6 to 8 pm.

In Stephen Buscemi's hands, darkness isn't merely absence but material, something to be worked, adjusted, and resisted. His studio becomes a space where contrasts accumulate: the coolness of monochrome against the warmth of skin tones, the pull between figuration and abstraction, the friction of elegance and unease. The title *Playing In And Out Of Tune* reflects this oscillation, suggesting a practice that finds beauty in tension and imperfection, in moments that waver between control and release.

Each painting begins in darkness, a deep indigo ground from which light is coaxed to the surface. Buscemi's process is fundamentally subtractive: instead of layering pigment to build form, he extracts it, drawing his figures out from the shadow with airbrushed acrylic and the faintest gestures of a brush. This reversal of convention gives the paintings their spectral gravity. Light becomes a sculptural force, shaping bodies that hover between emergence and disappearance.

The paintings in this exhibition inhabit a theater of intimacy and performance. *The Performer* and *The Guest* stage their figures within confined, ambiguous arenas, half stage, half dreamspace. Gestures feel rehearsed yet involuntary, costumes as elegant as they are estranging. Elsewhere, in *Persuasion (II)* and *Toy Soldier*, compositions tighten until the subjects almost dissolve into the darkness that frames them. Buscemi's figures appear mid-gesture, hands hovering, faces turned away, as if caught in a private choreography glimpsed from the wings.

In *5th Pos.*, the motif of performance becomes literal. The title refers to a dancer's fifth position, a classical stance that crosses the feet to form an "X", a mark of balance and tension. The figure's posture is both poised and defiant, an emblem for Buscemi's own painterly stance: grounded yet unsettled, disciplined yet open to improvisation.

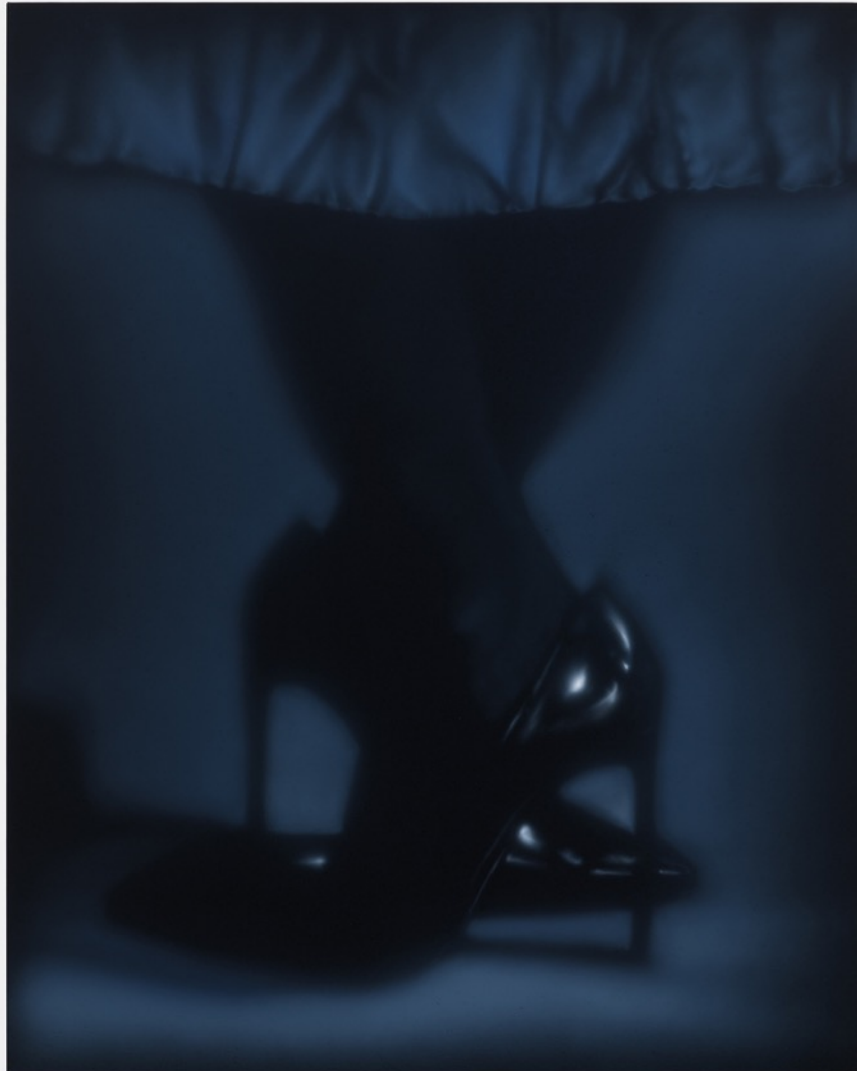
Throughout *Playing In And Out Of Tune*, Buscemi alternates between warmth and restraint, fullness and erasure. The viewer is drawn close, positioned as an eavesdropper on scenes that unfold in near silence. These moments feel overheard rather than witnessed, as if the paintings reveal only what they choose to. Figures and ground invert; presence and absence trade roles. Each work holds its tension quietly, a performance of balance where intimacy and opacity coexist.



STEPHEN BUSCEMI

Stephen Buscemi (b. 1998, Long Island, NY) is an American painter whose practice has garnered growing attention across the United States and Europe. In recent years, Buscemi's work has been featured in numerous international exhibitions, including solo presentations at Harper's, New York (2024) and Monti8, Latina, Italy (2024), as well as group shows at Carl Kostyál, Marettimo, Italy; Harper's, East Hampton and Chelsea; Giovanni's Room, Los Angeles; Blade Study, New York; and Lorin Gallery, Los Angeles. His work has also been exhibited at MEGA Art Fair in Milan and in curated projects such as What I Want You To See at Monti8, Latina, and High Stakes in Paris.

Buscemi's paintings have been recognized for their atmospheric use of light and shadow, as well as their subtle balance between figuration and abstraction. His distinct visual language—developed through a reverse, light-from-dark process—has been described in Artsy, Artviewer, and Artribune as both emotive and enigmatic. Buscemi received his BFA in Studio Art from SUNY Cortland in 2021 and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.



Stephen Buscemi | *5th Pos.*, 2025 | acrylic on linen
60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm)



Stephen Buscemi | *5th Pos.*, 2025
(detail)



Stephen Buscemi | *Toy Soldier*, 2025 | acrylic on linen
30 x 40 inches (76.2 x 101.6 cm)



Stephen Buscemi | *Toy Soldier*, 2025
(detail)



Stephen Buscemi | *The Lesson*, 2025 | acrylic on linen
50 x 84 1/8 inches (127 x 213.7 cm)

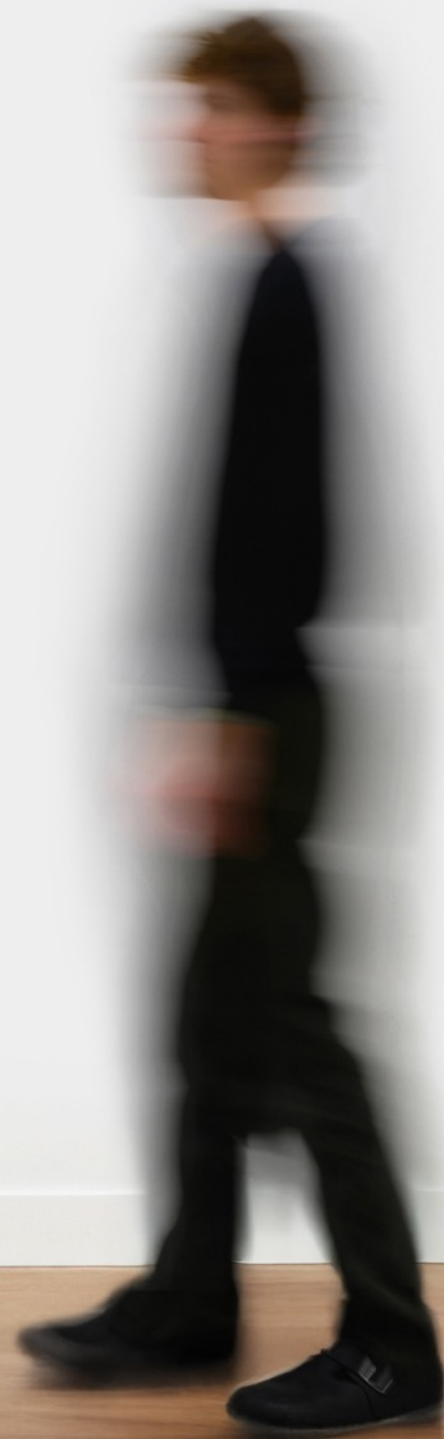
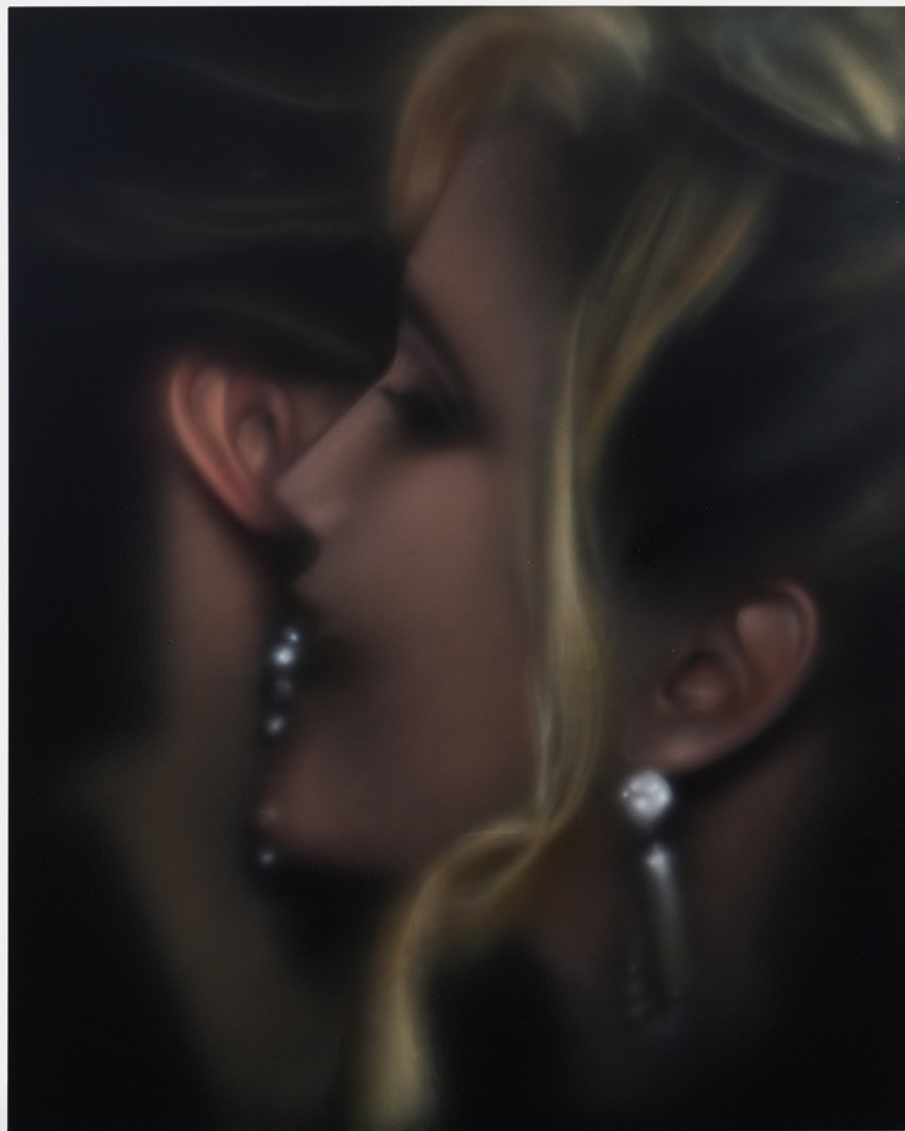




Stephen Buscemi | *The Guest.*, 2025 | acrylic on linen
60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm)



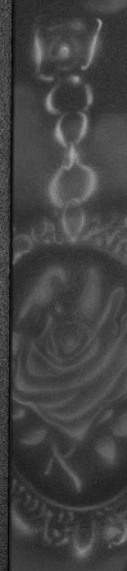
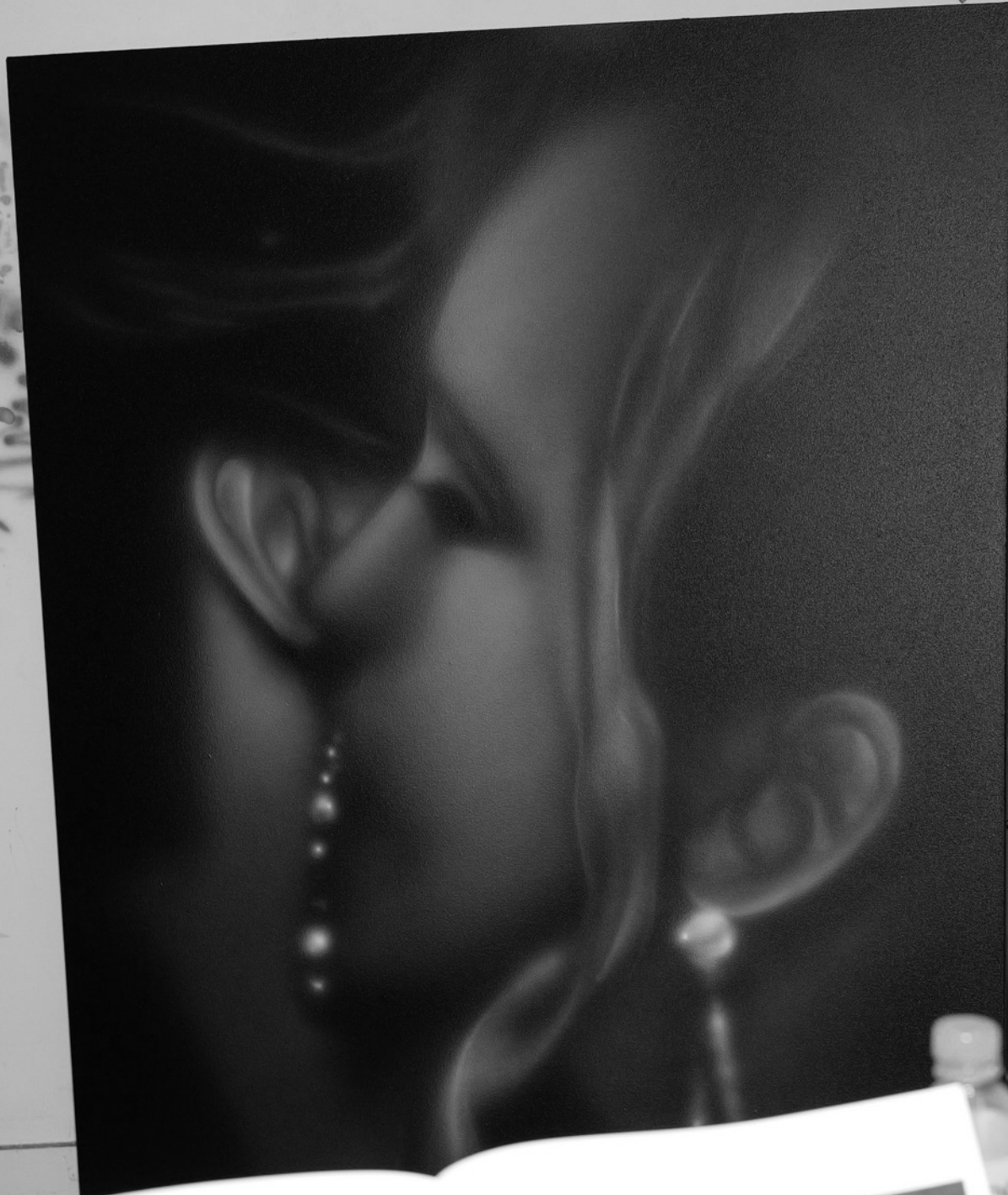
Stephen Buscemi | *Toy Soldier*, 2025
(detail)

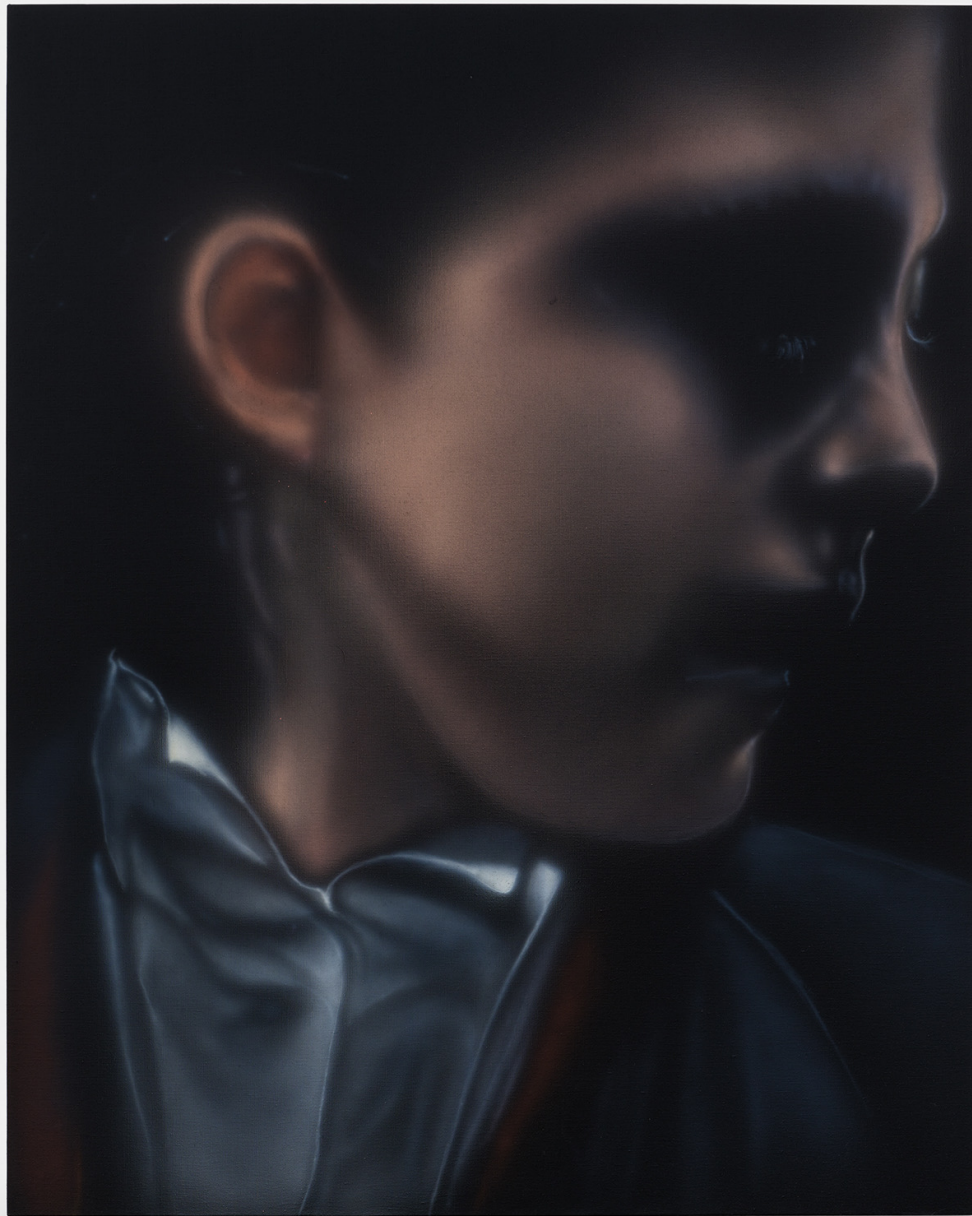


Stephen Buscemi | *Persuasion (II)*, 2025 | acrylic on linen
60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm)



Stephen Buscemi | *Persuasion (II)*, 2025
(detail)





Stephen Buscemi | *The Performer*, 2025 | acrylic on linen
60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm)



Stephen Buscemi | *Mirrors (Twins)*, 2025 | acrylic on linen
60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm)



Stephen Buscemi | *Mirrors (Twins)*, 2025
(diptych)



Stephen Buscemi | *Mirrors (Twins)*, 2025 | acrylic on linen
60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm)



Stephen Buscemi | *Playing In And Out of Tune*, 2025 | acrylic on linen
60 x 50 inches (152.4 x 127 cm)



Stephen Buscemi | *Playing In And Out of Tune*, 2025
(detail)



Stephen Buscemi | *Black Hand*, 2025 | acrylic on linen
40 x 30 inches (101.6 x 76.2 cm)

